A Handbook of Modern Arabic Historical Scholarship on the Ancient and Medieval Periods

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Historiography of Pre-Islamic Arabia: Arab Scholars and Their Contributions to the Writing of the History of Ancient Yemen

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1 Introduction

Our knowledge of pre-Islamic Arabia, and in particular Yemen, has been completely transformed in the last four decades. The primary sources for writing the history of pre-Islamic Arabia, and in particular Yemen, are the pre-Islamic ancient North Arabian (Safaitic, Thamudic, Dadanic-Lihyanite, etc.),[1] and South Arabian (Sabaic, Qatabanic, Minaic, etc.) inscriptions as well as the archaeological discoveries.[2] Tens of thousands of these inscriptions have been discovered all over Arabia. More than 15,000 ancient South Arabian inscriptions have been discovered, primarily in Yemen,[3] among them the newly discovered minuscule texts (*zabūr*) written on palm leaf stalks.[4] These are the *Werkzeug* of the historian of ancient Yemen.

This chapter aims to introduce the works of the Arab scholars who have made distinguished contributions to the historiography of pre-Islamic South Arabia using the archaeological and epigraphic sources.[5] It draws attention to the significance of the Arabic language studies on the epigraphy and archaeology of ancient South Arabia. Further, this study will attempt to relate key elements of the history of pre-Islamic Arabia to the epigraphic sources of Southern Arabia and evaluate how modern Arab historians are dealing with these issues.

An assessment of the modern Arabic scholarship on ancient Yemen must include a critical evaluation of the contributions. A focus on some significant

1 Online Corpus of the Inscriptions of Ancient North Arabia: http://krc.orient.ox.ac.uk/ociana/index.php.
2 Simpson, *Queen of Sheba*.
3 Corpus of South Arabian Inscriptions: http://csai.humnet.unipi.it.
4 Maraqten, *Altsüdarabische Texte auf Holzstäbchen*.
5 Note that the Arabic transliteration system used for this chapter is that of the *Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft* (DMG) as this is the standard transliteration system used by all scholars of South Arabian epigraphy including those in the English-speaking countries.

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contributions will be offered. Furthermore, this paper will review the results of more than four decades of archaeological research in Arabia that have greatly changed our historical and linguistic knowledge of the region. The topics to be covered are as follows:

– Ancient Civilizations in Yemen: An Outline
– Archaeological Discoveries: The Contribution of Arab Scholarship
– Editing Ancient South Arabian Inscriptions
– Epigraphy and Writing the History of Ancient Yemen
– The Methodologies of Modern Arab Historians and an Assessment of their Contributions on Ancient Yemen

2 Ancient Civilizations in Yemen: An Outline

The contribution of the Arabian Peninsula, and in particular ancient Yemen, to World History cannot be overlooked.[6] Evidence from archaeological discoveries proves the major significance of ancient Yemen as a high culture in the ancient Near East. Ancient Yemen played an important role not only in creating cultural notions which partly impacted the emergence of Islam, but also as a mediator of merchandise and cultural trends between India and the Mediterranean World.[7] Events in Arabia in Late Antiquity and during the emergence of Islam, which developed in Arabia proper within the context of Late Antiquity, changed the face of the Ancient World.[8]

In ancient South Arabia (corresponding to modern-day Yemen) four major kingdoms existed during the period from at least the beginning of the first millennium BCE to the eve of Islam in the seventh century CE. These are Saba', Maʿīn, Qataban and Hadramawt.[9] Our knowledge of these cultures can only be obtained from the epigraphic evidence since no literary records in book form from ancient Yemen have survived. Ancient South Arabian (ASA) is a general term applied to four different languages, namely Sabaic, Qatabanic, Minaic and Hadramitic. Minaic is also designated by some scholars as Madhābic, from Wadi Madhāb in the Yemeni Jawf. There are also other languages, such as Awsanite, spoken in the kingdom of Awsān in Wadi Markha.[10]

6 There are several general works on the ancient civilizations in Yemen, see instance Simpson, *Queen of Sheba* and *al-Mawsūʿa al-Yamanīya.*
7 Fisher, *Arabs and Empires before Islam.*
8 Al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity.*
9 Simpson, *Queen of Sheba.*
10 Robin, Before Himyar: Epigraphic Evidence for the Kingdoms of South Arabia, 90–126.

The major ancient South Arabian languages or dialects are designated on the basis of a list of the four most important peoples (*ethnē*) of ancient South Arabia, namely, the Sabaeans, the Qatabanians, the Minaeans and the Hadramites, by the Greek geographer Eratosthenes (third century BCE). These languages are related to the major South Arabian kingdoms, namely Saba', Maʿīn, Qataban and Hadramawt. Some scholars refer to these languages as Epigraphic South Arabian, others as Old South Arabian, or sometimes as Ṣayhadic in reference to the Ṣayhad desert around the Empty Quarter, as it has been called by the classical Arabic authors.[11] Yemeni scholars called the ancient South Arabian language group the "ancient Yemeni language" and the texts "Yemeni inscriptions".[12]

Sabaic is the major language and the most well-attested in inscriptions. Three main phases of the languages of ancient South Arabian linguistic history are recognized. These are: Early Sabaic (tenth century to second century BCE), Middle Sabaic (first century BCE to the middle of the fourth century CE) and Late Sabaic (middle of the fourth century CE to the eve of Islam).[13] Two scripts have been used for writing the languages of ancient Yemen, namely *musnad* and *zabūr*. The linguistic phases correspond to the phases of the monumental *musnad* and the minuscule *zabūr* scripts.[14] These two scripts have been the standard scripts for writing thousands of ASA inscriptions which transmitted South Arabian cultural content all over ancient South Arabia throughout its ancient history.[15]

3 Archaeological Discoveries: The Contribution of Arab Scholarship

3.1 *Notes on the History of Research: Travelers and International Missions*

Evidence from archaeological discoveries proves the great importance of ancient Yemen as a high culture in the ancient Near East and our knowledge of pre-Islamic Arabia has been changed drastically in the last four decades through these discoveries.[16] Yemen is one of the most difficult countries for archaeological work and Yemeni studies have been largely neglected by many orientalists. Several western travelers and researchers carried out journeys to

11 Nebes and Stein, Ancient South Arabian, 145–178.
12 Bāfaqīh et al., *Muḫtārāt min an-nuqūš an-yamanīya al-qadīma.*
13 Robin, Before Himyar: Epigraphic Evidence for the Kingdoms of South Arabia, 90–126.
14 Maraqten, *Altsüdarabische Texte auf Holzstäbchen*, 41–56.
15 CSAI – Database: *Corpus of South Arabian Inscriptions*: http://csai.humnet.unipi.it.
16 Simpson, *Queen of Sheba.*

Yemen in the nineteenth century. Some of those travelers disappeared or were killed in Yemen.[17] However, today western researchers are much respected among Yemenis.

Since the time of Carsten Niebuhr (1733–1815) who directed the Danish expedition to Arabia (1761–1767),[18] numerous European travelers undertook expeditions to Yemen, among them the German Ulrich Jasper Seetzen (1767–1811) who traveled in several Arab countries, including Yemen, and was the first person to bring some of the South Arabian inscriptions to Europe. Seetzen disappeared in the area of Taʿizz.[19]

With the decipherment of the ancient South Arabian script by Wilhelm Gesenius (1786–1842) and Emil Rödiger (1801–1874), the discipline of ancient South Arabian studies began in Europe.[20] The Austrian traveler and scholar Edward Glaser (1855–1908) was one of the esteemed travelers who collected inscriptions in original form and squeezes and sent them to the European museums.[21] More than two thousand inscriptions bear the siglum of his name.[22]

Little has been written by modern Arab scholars on the history of research in Yemen. An exception is Bāfaqīh's study on the Swedish scholar Landberg and his scientific activities in Yemen.[23]

Archaeological research in Yemen has been organized and carried out by several Western archaeological institutions and missions since the 1970s. Archaeological investigations have been primarily carried out by the German Archaeological Institute (DAI), the French Archaeological Mission in the Republic of Yemen, and the Italian Archaeological Mission in the Republic of Yemen, as well as the American Foundation for the Study of Man (AFSM). DAI (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut – Section Ṣanʿāʾ) concentrated on the oasis of Ma'rib. Significant discoveries have been published by the DAI in several monographs (Archäologische Berichte aus dem Yemen vols. I–XIV).[24] The

17 Von Wissman, *Arabien. Dokumente zur Entdeckungsgeschichte.*

18 Niebuhr, *Reisebeschreibung nach Arabien und anderen umliegenden Ländern.*

19 Nebes, Ulrich Jasper Seetzen im Jemen, 39–52.

20 Gesenius, Himjaritische Sprache und Schrift, 369–399.

21 See the digitalized squeezes of the Glaser Collection: http://glaser.acdh.oeaw.ac.at/#/.

22 Dostal, *Eduard Glaser: Forschungen im Yemen*; Müller, Der böhmische Südarabienreisende Eduard Glaser, 195–220.

23 Bafaqīh, *Al-Mustašriqūn wa-āṯār al-Yaman.*

24 On the archaeological and epigraphic discoveries in Yemen, see Müller, *Südarabien im Altertum*. This volume contains a select bibliography of the international contributions on the ancient civilizations of South Arabia from 1973 to 2011. Some Arabic contributions are mentioned in this bibliography. For earlier studies see the general bibliography of Chr. Robin, *Bibliographie générale systématique*, which contains the bibliographic data relating to ancient Yemen until the middle of the 1970s.

AFSM carried out excavations in Wadī Bayḥān and at Awām temple/Maḥram Bilqīs (1950–52), in the 1980s at Wadī al-Jūba, south of Maʾrib, and again at the Awām temple/Maḥram Bilqīs (1998–2006).[25]

3.2 *Arab Scholars and Their Contributions to the Field*

3.2.1 Arab Scientific Expeditions to Yemen

After the journey of the Austrian E. Glaser to Maʾrib in 1888, no other European travelers were able to visit Maʾrib for a long time.[26] However, the Syrian traveler Nazīh Muʾayyad al-ʿAẓm (1890–1977) who had visited Yemen already in 1927, was able to visit Maʾrib in 1936. This was the first scientific visit to Maʾrib after Glaser. Al-ʿAẓm's visit was in arrangement with Imām Yaḥyā (1869–1948) and he was accompanied by the Imam's soldiers. Al-ʿAẓm visited the remains of the old of city of Maʾrib, the Great Dam, and the Awām temple/Maḥram Bilqīs and took the first photographs of them. He made also some sketches of the Great Dam and copied some inscriptions engraved around the exterior wall of the Awām temple/Maḥram Bilqīs, among them parts of the inscription Ja 555. Further, he copied two inscriptions from Wadi Dhana published by G. Ryckmans (RES 5099+RES 5098 = Ry 350+Ry 351).[27]

The first Arab archaeological activity in Arabia was the scientific expedition of Cairo University to Yemen in 1936 under the direction of the Egyptian scholars Sulaymān Aḥmad Ḥuzayyin (1909–99), Ḫalil Yaḥyā Nāmī, Naṣr Šukrī and Muḥammad Tawfīq al-Dasūqī.[28] Meanwhile, the first Arabic language contribution to the publication of ancient South Arabian inscriptions was carried out by the Egyptian scholar Ḫalīl Yaḥyā Nāmī, who had joined the Egyptian archaeological expedition that was sent to Yemen by the University of Cairo in 1936 and directed by Ḥuzzayin. Nāmī recorded during this expedition 64 inscriptions from the Taʿizz area and 79 inscriptions primarily from Nāʿiṭ, north of Ṣanʿāʾ. Nāmī selected a good collection of inscriptions that he discovered and submitted them as a PhD thesis that was published in 1943.[29]

In 1943 Muḥammad Tawfīq al-Dasūqī was invited by the Yemeni government to prevent locust attacks in the country. During his work in the Yemeni Jawf (1943–45), he visited the archaeological sites there and made the first accurate

25 Maraqten, Sacred spaces in ancient Yemen – The Awām Temple, Maʾrib, 109–135.

26 Müller, Der böhmische Südarabienreisende Eduard Glaser, 195–220.

27 Al-ʿAẓm, *Rila fī bilād al-ʿArabīya as-Saʿīda*; Glanzman, Clarifying the Record: the Bayt ʾAwwam Revisited, 73–88.

28 Ḥuzayyin, *Baʿṯat al-ǧāmiʿa al-miṣrīya ilā l-Yaman wa-Ḥaḍramawt.*

29 Namī, *Našr nuqūš sāmīya qadīma min ǧanūb Ǧazīrat al-ʿArab.*

scientific documentation of the archaeology of the Jawf.[30] The Minaic inscriptions that he documented were published by Nāmī in a separate volume.[31]

In December 1951 the Egyptian Ministry of Education organized an expedition which was sent to Ṣanʿāʾ to document and gather Arabic manuscripts. This Egyptian delegation was led by Fuʾād Sayyid ʿImāra, the head of the Arabic manuscripts division in the Egyptian National Library. The Egyptians arrived at ʿAdan on their way to Ṣanʿāʾ to microfilm Yemeni manuscripts. They were received in Taʿizz by Imam Aḥmad and the Foreign Minister Qadi al-ʿAmrī and then flew to Ṣanʿāʾ, where they had access to the Western Library of the Great Mosque. They were able to microfilm about 300 manuscripts, including some of the collections of the former Imam Yaḥyā and other private collections. The expedition published an important bibliographic volume.[32]

The Egyptian archaeologist Aḥmed Fakhry (1905–73) undertook a scientific journey to Yemen and carried out research visits to Ṣirwāḥ, Maʾrib and the Jawf in 1947 with further journeys in 1948 and 1959.[33] He made an archaeological description of the sites and copied 136 inscriptions, of which 120 were previously unknown.[34]

The inscriptions copied by A. Fakhry have been published by G. Ryckmans.[35] Fakhry visited Maʾrib in 1947 and was aware of the previous work at the Awām temple/Maḥram Bilqī, especially that of E. Glaser. He made a description of the Maḥram Bilqīs and a plan sketch and copied more inscriptions, among them CIH 375 (= Ja 555), and made a sketch of the temple as well. Fakhry took additional photographs of the demolition of various archaeological structures in the Maʾrib oasis and especially at the Awām temple/Maḥram Bilqīs. This demolition was carried out by the governor of Maʾrib for construction of the new government building in the Old City of Maʾrib.[36] Fakhry summarized his archaeological journey in several articles, book chapters and two books, one in English (three vols.) and the other in Arabic.[37] Of importance is his article about his discovery of a hitherto unknown major Sabaean temple al-Masāǧid (ancient Ḏū-Maʿarabum) in Wadī al-Jūba south of Maʾrib.[38]

30 Tawfīq, *Āṯār Maʿīn fī Ǧawf al-Yaman.*
31 Nāmī, *Nuqūš ḫirbat Maʿīn.*
32 Nāmī. *Al-Baʿṯa al-miṣrīya.*
33 On the archaeological journeys of Ahmad Fakhry to Yemen see al-Ḫaṭīb, *Nuṣūṣ al-ḫaṭṭ al-musnad min al-Yaman*, 12–202.
34 Fakhry, *An Archaeological Journey to Yemen* (March–May, 1947).
35 Ryckmans, G. Epigraphical Texts, in Fakhry, *An Archaeological Journey to Yemen.*
36 Fakhry, *An Archaeological Journey to Yemen* (March–May, 1947).
37 Faḫrī, *Al-Yaman: Māḍīhā wa-ḥāḍrihā.*
38 Faḫrī, A. Aḥdaṯ al-iktišāfāt al-aṯarīya fī l-Yaman.

3.2.2 The Contributions of Arab Archaeologists to Ancient Yemeni Studies: Archaeological Surveys and Excavations

Archaeological excavations have been carried out in Yemen primarily by international missions and a few small excavations have been accomplished by Yemeni archaeologists.[39] The GOAM (the General Organization of Antiquities and Museums in Yemen) has conducted many regional archaeological surveys throughout the country although most of the reports are not published. However, some of the results have been published in short studies. It is worth noting that several Yemeni MA and PhD theses using have been based on the results of archaeological surveys which the students carried out from their own funds.

There are some solid MA theses that have been written at Ṣanʿāʾ University, especially those which depended on fieldwork in specific areas or archaeological sites where archaeological and epigraphic discoveries were studied. Among them is the thesis of M.A. Bāsalāma on Shibām al-Ġirās to the northeast of Ṣanʿāʾ.[40] Several studies were written on specific regions such as the archaeology of al-Yamānīyatayn south of Ṣanʿāʾ.[41] There are also an archaeological study based on the results of a survey in the area of al-Kasr in Wādī Hadramawt,[42] a study about the antiquities of Wādī Ğirdān,[43] another on archaeological investigations in the area of Al-ʿAwāliq,[44] an archaeological study dealing with Wādī Ḍahr, near Ṣanʿāʾ,[45] and a very good archaeological and epigraphic study based on a survey in the region of Hamdan, specifically in the area of the local kingdom of Suʿay.[46] Archaeological surveys have been carried out in the area of al-Maʿāfir, south of Taʿizz.[47] Another archaeological survey concentrated on the ancient port of al-Sawā located in the district of Sharʿab, in the governorate of Taʿizz.[48]

A study has been carried out on the ancient port of Qanā (today Bīr ʿAlī) which is located on the Indian Ocean coast, east of ʿAdan. It was the main port for the incense route which started in Qanā and ended in Gaza.[49] This

39 See *Ḥawlīyat al-āṯār al-yamanīya*, vol. 1, 2008 and vol. 2, 2009.
40 Bāsalāmah, *Šibām al-Ġirās*.
41 Rawḍān, *Al-Yamānīyatain*.
42 Rubāʿ, Manṭiqat al-kasr fī Wādī Ḥaḍramawt.
43 As-Sadla, *Wādī Ğirdān*.
44 Al-Baʿsī, *Mustawṭanāt awdiyat kūr al-ʿAwāliq*.
45 Al-Bakīr, *Āṯār wādī ḍahr at-tārīḫīya*.
46 Aḥsan, *Ittiḥād sumʿay: aṯ-ṯulṯ ḥumlān*.
47 Al-Ġawrī, *Al-Maʿāfir al-ġarbīya*; Ḥamīd, *Dirāsa lil-mawāqiʿ al-qadīma fī manṭiqatay qadas-sāmiʿ*.
48 Al-Šarʿabī, *Al-Sawā*.
49 Aš-Šarʿabī, *Mīnāʾ Qanā ʿalā al-baḥr al-ʿarabī*.

route passed through many caravan trade stations such as the Hadrami capital Shabwa, the Qatabanian capital Timnaʿ, the Sabaean metropolis Maʾrib, the Minaean cities of Yaṯul (Baraqish), Qarnāw (modern Kharibat Maʿīn), and Najran, several other caravan stations in Central and Northern Arabia, followed by Petra before terminating in Gaza.[50]

Only a small amount of work has been done by Arab scholars on the study of burial customs in Yemen. A royal tomb was excavated by GOAM near the Himyarite capital of Ẓafār and published.[51] The results of a GOAM excavation at the site al-Ḥiṣma in the district of Abyan, east of ʿAdan, were the subject of an MA thesis at Ṣanʿāʾ University which was published.[52] Al-Ḥuṣaynī has written a solid dissertation on landscape archaeology.[53]

Of special importance is the site of Qaryat Dhāt Kāhilum (*qryt ḏt khlm*), today Qaryat al-Faw, which was the royal headquarters of the kingdom of Kindah and which is located in Wādī ad-Dawāsir (today in Saudi Arabia). This site was excavated by King Saud University, Riyadh, under the direction of A. Al-Ansārī beginning in the early 1970s.[54]

4 Editing Ancient South Arabian Inscriptions

4.1 *Ancient South Arabian Languages* (*ASA*)

Egyptian, Syrian, Palestinian, Jordanian, Iraqi, Saudi and Yemeni scholars have all contributed to the field of South Arabian epigraphy. There is still no comprehensive grammar of ancient South Arabic written in Arabic for Arabic-speaking learners. However, there is an Arabic translation of A.F.L. Beeston's *Sabaic Grammar*, which is widely used,[55] while the chrestomathy written by Bāfaqīh and others serves as a useful guide for students and specialists.[56] Another essential tool for the field is the English–French–Arabic *Sabaic Dictionary*.[57]

50 Several Arabic studies were achieved on incense trade and the incense trade route, see Abd al-Mawlā, *Tiǧārat al-baḫḫūr fī ǧanūb šibh al-Ǧazīra al-ʿArabīya*.

51 See Al-ʿAnsī, *al-Qabr al-malakī*.

52 Al-Ḥusaynī, *Ṭuruq ad-dafn wal-aṯāṯ al-ǧanāʾizī fī l-Yaman.*

53 Al-Ḥusaynī, *Al-Ḥawāǧiz al-ǧidārīya fī l-manāṭiq al-maftūḥa fī l-Yaman al-qadīm*.

54 Final results of the excavations are not yet published, see the general book on this site of al-Anṣārī, *Qaryat al-Fau.*

55 Beeston, *Sabaic Grammar*; two translations of this book have been made, see Bīston, *Al-Qawāʿid as-sabaʾīya* and Bīston, *Qawāʿid al-luġa al-ʿarabīya al-ǧanūbīya*.

56 Bāfaqīh et al., *Muḫtārāt min an-nuqūš al-yamanīya al-qadīma*; Ismaʿīl, *Al-Luġa al-yamanīya al-qadīma*. This book is based primarily on the Bāfaqīh et al., *Muḫtārāt* and not on the corpus of the texts.

57 Beeston et al., *Sabaic Dictionary.*

A pioneering work for studying the relation between Classical Arabic and the language of the ancient South Arabian inscriptions has been written by M. Ghul.[58] Further studies were carried out by I. Al-Selwi,[59] ʿA. Miḫlāfī[60] and H.A.M. al-Hilālī.[61]

There are also some important studies on the Yemeni Arabic dialects, which are very important for understanding specific architectural and agricultural terms such as the vocabulary related to irrigation,[62] in addition to the agricultural seasons.[63] The main Arabic dictionary on this topic was written by M. al-ʾIryānī.[64] General and introductory studies on Yemeni dialects have been written by several scholars including M. Kāmil,[65] and A. Sharafaddīn.[66]

4.2 *Studying Ancient South Arabian Inscriptions*

ASA texts are primarily composed in four languages commonly called Sabaic, Minaic, Qatabanic, and Hadramitic. Thousands of ASA inscriptions have been discovered. This amount varies depending on whether one includes all categories of inscriptions and whether or not inscribed small objects such as seals and graffiti are considered. The inscriptions serving as sources for the study of the ASA language-family cover a period of about sixteen centuries from the beginning of the first millennium BCE until the sixth century CE.[67]

The editing of ancient South Arabian inscriptions started in the second half of the nineteenth century.[68] Around 10,000 inscriptions have now been published.[69] At present, the *Corpus of South Arabian Inscriptions* (CSAI) comprises approximately 7,500 texts digitized by the team of the University of Pisa guided by A. Avanzini. These inscriptions are now available online.[70]

Two types of ASA script are known, the so-called *musnad* or monumental script and the so-called *zabūr* or minuscule script. Both scripts seem to have been used for all ASA languages. The ASA alphabet has 29 graphemes, in contrast

58 Ghul, *Early Southern Arabian Languages and Classical Arabic Sources.*
59 Al-Selwi, *Jemenitische Wörter in den Werken von al-Hamdānī und Našwān.*
60 Al-Miḫlāfī, *al-Mansūb ilā lahağāt al-Yaman fī kutub at-turāṯ.*
61 Al-Hilālī, *Dalālat al-alfāẓ al-yamanīya fī baʿḍ al-muʿǧamāt al-ʿarabīya.*
62 Dādiyyah, *Alfāz al-zirāʿah war-ray*; Aš-Šamārī, *Lahǧat Ḫubān.*
63 Al-ʿAnsī, *Al-Maʿālim al-zirāʿiyya fī l-Yaman.*
64 Al-Iryānī, *Al-Muʿǧam al-yamanī fī l-luġa wat-turāṯ.*
65 Kāmil. *Al-Lahağāt al-ʿArabiyya al-ḥadīṯa fī l-Yaman.*
66 Šarafaddīn, *Lahağāt al-Yaman qadīman wa-ḥadīthan.*
67 http://dasi.humnet.unipi.it/index.php?id=42&prjId=1&corId=0&colId=0&navId=0.
68 On the history of research of the ancient South Arabian inscriptions see Leslau, Ethiopic and South *Arabian*, 467–527.
69 See Robin, *Bibliographie générale systématique* and Müller, *Südarabien im Altertum.*
70 http://dasi.humnet.unipi.it/index.php?id=42&prjId=1&corId=0&colId=0&navId=0.

with the limited repertoire of 22 letters found in the Northwest Semitic group of alphabets such Phoenician, Hebrew and Aramaic.[71] No Arabic contributions about the South Arabian script system or palaeography are available. However, a study on the South Arabian monograms, which are engraved in association with the inscriptions, was written in Arabic.[72] The first Arabic publication of ancient South Arabian inscriptions was the dissertation of Ḫ.Y. Nāmī submitted to the Egyptian University (Cairo) and published in 1943.[73]

The Awām temple (modern folkloric name Māḥram Bilqīs) is one of the most important archaeological sites in Yemen. This extramuros temple was the national and the central Sabaean temple and is located about 3.5 km south of the ancient Sabaean capital at Maʾrib. It was excavated at the beginning of the 1950s by the AFSM. Excavations were resumed there by the AFSM in 1998. More than 800 Sabaean inscriptions were discovered at this site by the AFSM in 1950s,[74] and additional inscriptions were discovered by the AFSM during the most recent excavations inside this temple.

The temple was built by the Sabaeans at the edge of what is now Ramlat as-Sabʿatayn desert, known as Ṣayhad in the Islamic sources. It was built around the time of the emergence of Sabaean culture around the beginning of the first millennium BCE. The temple, which was called by the Sabaeans *ʾwm*/Awām, was in use until the end of the fourth century CE. It was the main centre of worship for the Sabaean national deity, Almaqah, and hence doubtless the key focus of the concepts of sacred space and sacred time in ancient Yemen. This temple was not only the main pilgrimage place for the Sabaeans, similar to Mecca on the eve of Islam, but also the socioeconomic centre of the Sabaean kingdom.[75]

M. al-Iryāni published in 1973 (reprinted 1990) 34 inscriptions without photographs from Awām temple/Maḥram Bilqīs.[76] In the second edition of his book, the number of inscriptions was increased. Furthermore, al-Iryāni published several other inscriptions in separate articles.[77] The Yemeni scholar Z. ʿInān (1908–1992) was the representative for the Yemeni government during

71 Maraqten, *Altsüdarabische Texte auf Holzstäbchen*, 41–56.

72 Aš-Šarʿī, *Aṭ-Ṭaġrāʾ fī l-Yaman al-Qadīm.*

73 Nāmī, *Našr nuqūš sāmīya qadīma min ǧanūb Ǧazīrat al-ʿArab*.

74 Jamme, *Sabaean Inscriptions from Mahram Bilqīs.* Some of the archaeological and epigraphic results which the author as an epigrapher of the AFSM has documented at the Awām temple, Mahram Bilqīs, Yemen in 9 seasons (1998–2006) are summarized in Maraqten, Sacred spaces in ancient Yemen – The Awām Temple, Maʾrib, 109–135.

75 The majority of the Sabaic inscriptions discovered by the AFSM were published in Jamme, *Sabaean Inscriptions from Mahram Bilqīs.*

76 Al-Iryānī, *Fī tārīḫ al-Yaman. Nuqūš musnadīya wa-taʿlīqāt.*

77 Müller, *Südarabien im Altertum*.

the AFSM excavations at the Awām temple/ Maḥram Bilqīs from 1951 until 1952. ʿInān claims to have been personally responsible for the excavation.[78] He gathered some of the latex squeezes of the AFSM expedition and sent them to the Yemeni government. Some of these were kept in Taʿizz and others at the National Museum in Ṣanʿāʾ.[79] ʿInān copied about 200 inscriptions and published 80 in his work *Tārīḫ ḥaḍārat al-Yaman al-qadīm* (published 1976). Most of them had already been published by A. Jamme.[80]

The Yemeni government sent Ḫ.Y. Nāmī, who was a member of the Egyptian expedition for collecting Arabic manuscripts in Yemen (1951), to Maʾrib in March 1952 to check the work of the AFSM at Awām temple/Maḥram Bilqīs.[81] This was shortly after the AFSM left (February 1952) and it was possible for him to copy and photograph a few inscriptions that were still visible in the north-east side of the Peristyle Hall. Ḫ.Y. Nāmī published several inscriptions in a series of articles in *Maǧallat kulliyat al-ādāb* (Ǧamiʿat al-Qāhira).[82]

Aḥmad Šarafaddīn was the first Yemeni scholar who published ancient South Arabian inscriptions. He published a booklet in 1961[83] and a major work in 1966.[84] Sharafaddīn was a traditional historian and was not trained in epigraphy. However, he visited the Awām temple/Maḥram Bilqīs after the AFSM left the site and copied and photographed some inscriptions, which he published in his two books. It is not clear if he copied the inscriptions himself during a visit to the site or just used the copies of ʿInān, who mentions clearly that he gave the copies to Sharafaddīn.[85]

The recent archaeological activities of the AFSM served as a continuation of the efforts of the earlier Wendell Phillips expedition (1951–52). The nine seasons of excavations (1998–2006) carried out by the American Foundation for the Study of Man (AFSM) in the Awām complex, revealed more than 500 inscriptions that have shed new light on religious practices in the temple and surrounding area as well as on the cultural history of Yemen. This corpus now forms the largest and most important archive of ancient Yemen.[86]

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78 ʿInān, *Tārīḫ ḥaḍārat al-Yaman al-qadīm*, 139f.

79 ʿInān, *Tārīḫ ḥaḍārat al-Yaman al-qadīm*, 140.

80 Jamme, *Sabaean Inscriptions from Mahram Bilqīs*.

81 Nāmī, *Al-Biʿṯa al-miṣrīya*.

82 See the inscriptions under the sigla Nāmī in Kitchen, *Documentation for Ancient Arabia*.

83 Sharafaddīn, *Yemen. Arabia Felix*.

84 *Taʾrīḫ al-Yaman al-ṯaqāfī*.

85 *Taʾrīḫ al-Yaman al-ṯaqāfī*.

86 Some of the archaeological and epigraphic results which the author as an epigrapher of the AFSM has documented at the Awām temple, Maḥram Bilqīs, Yemen in 9 seasons (1998–2006) are summarized in Maraqten, Sacred spaces in ancient Yemen – The Awām Temple, Maʾrib, 109–135.

One of the most significant recent findings in Yemen is the discovery of thousands of ancient South Arabian minuscule texts incised on wood, primarily palm-leaf stalks (*ʿasīb*, plural *ʿusub*) and *ʿarʿar* (juniper). Their provenance is the Yemeni Jawf, in particular the town of Al-Sawdāʾ, known in ancient times as Naššān. The inscriptions contain essential information about everyday life and the socioeconomic structure of ancient Yemen. They include documents related to daily life such as letters, contracts and transactions dating from the beginning of the first millennium BCE to the eve of Islam. The first discovery was at the beginning of the 1970s. The Palestinian scholar Maḥmūd ʿAlī Ghūl was the first person to succeed in deciphering the minuscule script of these documents which is known in the Arabic tradition as the *zabūr* script.[87] The whole corpus of minuscule inscriptions contains about five thousand texts.

The Yemeni scholar Y.M. ʿAbdallāh was the first person to publish a document in miniscule script.[88] More than three thousand minuscule documents are stored in the National Museum of Ṣanʿāʾ. About one hundred minuscule texts from this collection have been published by the author of this study,[89] including some texts of this collection which were submitted as an MA dissertation to the University of Ṣanʿāʾ by the Yemeni student A. Faqʿaṣ.[90] It is urgent to continue the publication of this collection.

Among the best studies and editions by modern Arab scholars of the ancient South Arabian inscriptions are those written by Yūsuf Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh (University of Ṣanʿāʾ).[91] In addition to his popular book on the ancient history of Yemen,[92] he published several studies including an edition of an inscription of a solar hymn discovered in Wādī Qāniya, east of Ṣanʿāʾ, which is similar to the pre-Islamic Arabic poems.[93] There are some dissertations of Yemeni students which focus on the publication of recently discovered inscriptions. For instance a group of Sabaic texts from Khawlān were published by M. al-Salāmī in his dissertation[94] and another group of Sabaic texts were the topic of a PhD submitted to the University of Pisa.[95] Recently a collection of inscriptions from Khawlān has been published.[96] Furthermore, some studies were dedicated to

87 See Beeston. Mahmoud ʿAli Ghul and the Sabaean Cursive Script, 15–19.

88 See ʿAbdallāh, *Ḫaṭṭ al-musnad wan-nuqūš al-yamaniyya al-qadīmah*; *Risāla min imraʾa bi-ḫaṭṭ az-zabūr*.

89 Maraqten. *Altsüdarabische Texte auf Holzstäbchen.*

90 Faqʿas, *Nuqūš ḫašabiyya bi-ḫaṭṭ az-zabūr.*

91 Müller, *Südarabien im Altertum*.

92 ʿAbdallāh, *Awrāq fī tārīḫ al-Yaman.*

93 ʿAbdallāh, Naqš al-qaṣīda al-ḥimyariyya.

94 Al-Salami, *Sabäische Inschriften aus dem Ḫawlān*.

95 Noman, *A Study of south Arabian Inscriptions from the region of Dhamār* (*Yemen*).

96 Al-Hayyāl, *Min nuqūš al-musnad fī Ḫawlān*.

specific groups of inscriptions such as the inscriptions of the Yemen exhibit in Paris in 1997.[97]

Some work has also been done on architectural terminology in ancient Yemen. A dissertation from the University of Ṣanʿāʾ deals with architectural terms,[98] and another thesis has been written on the royal palaces.[99] There is also a general study on the architectural characteristics of the town in ancient Yemen.[100] Domestic architecture has received little attention so far.

Recently discovered Sabaic and Minaic inscriptions in the Yemeni Jawf have been published. These inscriptions are stored in the Yemen National Museum of Ṣanʿāʾ.[101] M. Bāfaqīh has made important contributions to the study of the Hadramitic and Qatabanic inscriptions.[102] An important edition of Qatabanic inscriptions has been published by a team of Yemeni scholars including M. Al-Ḥāǧǧ.[103]

Another important topic related to the field of ancient South Arabian inscriptions is the linguistic study of proper names. This sub-discipline deals with the ancient South Arabian onomastica and proper names of families, clans and tribes. Ancient South Arabian personal names were studied primarily by Arab students in Germany and in France. Y.M. Abdallāh published a comparative study of the personal and tribal names mentioned in the pre-Islamic inscriptions and in the works of the medieval Yemeni scholar al-Hamdānī.[104] Proper names have been studied and analyzed in a number of doctoral dissertations. For instance, early Sabaic personal names were studied by S. Tairan,[105] Minaic by names S. Al-Said,[106] Qatabanic names by H. Hayajneh[107] and ancient South Arabian women's names by A. Sholan.[108] A specific study of the onomastica of the CIH (The South Arabian portion of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*)

97 Bākarmum, *Nuqūš ʿarabiyya ǧanūbiyya qadīma min al-Yaman*.
98 Al-Aġbarī, *Muʿǧam al-alfāẓ al-miʿmāriyya*.
99 Al-Ḥāyir, *Al-Qaṣr fī l-Yaman al-qadīm*.
100 Ḥanšūr, *Al-Ḫaṣāʾiṣ al-miʿmāriyya lil-madīna al-yamaniyya al-qadīma*.
101 Arbach and Schiettecatte, *Catalogue des pièces archéologiques et épigraphiques du Jawf*; Arbach and Audouin, *Collection of epigraphic and archaeological artifacts*; Arbach, Schiettecatte and al-Hādī, *Collection of Funerary Stelae from the Jawf Valley*. These three volumes are written in English and Arabic.
102 See Bāfaqīh, *Āṯār wa-nuqūš al-ʿUqla*.
103 Al-Ḥāǧǧ, *Nuqūš qatabāniyya min madīnat maryama*.
104 ʿAbdallāh, *Die Personennamen in al-Hamdānī's Iklīl*.
105 Tairan, *Die Personennamen in den altsabäischen Inschriften*.
106 Al-Said, *Die Personennamen in den minäischen Inschriften*.
107 Hayajneh, *Die Personennamen in den qatabānischen Inschriften*.
108 Sholan, *Frauennamen in den Altsüdarabischen Inschriften*.

was made by M. Arbach.[109] These researchers also wrote a few studies on this topic in Arabic.

5 Epigraphy and the Historiography of Ancient Yemen

5.1 *Natural Resources*

Little research has been done on the topic of natural resources in ancient Yemen. An MA thesis collected some data about this topic, which depending more or less on the work of A. Sima.[110] Natural catastrophes such as volcanic activities and floods which are recorded in inscriptions have received some attention from scholars.[111]

5.2 *Historical Geography: Toponomies and Tribes*

The study of the historical geography of Arabia in general, and specifically Yemen, still depends on the works of the medieval Yemeni scholars (tenth century CE) Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan al-Hamdānī[112] and Našwān al-Ḥimyarī.[113] The basic references for studying the tribal names and toponomies of Yemen are the works of M.A. al-Ḥaǧrī (1889–1960),[114] I.ʿA. al-Maqḥafī[115] and Ḥ.ʿA. Luqmān.[116]

No comprehensive studies on the tribes in the pre-Islamic period have yet been carried out, though some individual studies have been published.[117] There are studies on specific tribes such as Khawlān[118] and Ǧurat.[119] Another study has been written on the tribes of the Tihāma, which was known in the Sabaic inscriptions as Sahratān.[120] ʿA. Aš-Šayba wrote a dissertation on place names in the ancient South Arabian inscriptions. However, his work deals only

109 Arbach, *Les noms propres du corpus*; *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum. Pars quarta: inscriptiones ḥimyariticas et sabæas continens*.
110 Al-Ǧāwīš, *Al-Mawārid aṭ-ṭabīʿīya fī l-Yaman al-qadīm*; See also Sima, *Tiere, Pflanzen, Steine und Metalle in den altsüdarabischen Inschriften.*
111 Al-ʿAwīl, *Al-Aḫṭār wal-kawāriṯ fī l-Yaman al-qadīm.*
112 al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifat ǧazīrat al-ʿarab; Kitāb al-Iklīl* I, II, VIII, X.
113 Al-Ḥimyarī, *Šams al-ʿulūm wa-dawāʾ al-ʿarab*.
114 al-Ḥaǧrī, *Maǧmūʿ buldān al-Yaman wa-qabāʾilihā*.
115 Maqḥafī, *Muʿǧam al-buldān wal-qabāʾil al-yamanīya.*
116 Luqmān, *Tārīḫ al-Qabāʾil al-yamanīya*.
117 Mikyāš, *Asmāʾ al-qabāʾil fī an-nuqūš al-ʿarabīya al-ǧanūbīya*; Alsekaf, *La geographie tribale du Yemen antique.*
118 As-Salāmī, *Ḫawlān al-arḍ wal-qabīla fī l-maṣādir at-tārīḫiyya*.
119 An-Nāširī, *Ḏī Ǧurat wa-dawruhum fī ḥukm dawlat Sabaʾ*.
120 Wušāḥ, *Qabāʾil as-sahra.*

with the attestations and identification of the place names in the inscriptions and is not concerned with the etymological analysis of the names.[121]

Several studies have focused on specific cities such as the capitals of the ancient kingdoms of Yemen. Maraqten has written a case study on the capital of the Sabaean kingdom, Maʾrib. This study deals with the history of Maʾrib and includes an analysis of its administrative and social history in the light of the Sabaean inscriptions.[122] Another study is dedicated to the history of the city of Ṣanʿāʾ.[123] There are also studies on Ẓafār,[124] capital of the Himyarite kingdom, the Qatabanian capital of Timnaʿ,[125] and other ancient urban centers such as Baynūn[126] and Yaklāʾ (modern Naḫlat al-Ḥamrāʾ).[127]

5.3 *General History*

There are a few studies that deal with the general history of ancient Yemen.[128] Apart from Ǧ. ʿAlī's encyclopedic history of the Arabs before Islam, *al-Mufaṣṣal*, the first general history of ancient Yemen written by an Arab author in Arabic was by *Tārīḫ al-Yaman al-qadīm* by the Yemeni scholar Zayd ʿInān in 1949. This was followed by another important survey also entitled *Tārīḫ al-Yaman al-qadīm* by the Yemeni scholar M. Bāfaqīh.[129] A large number of MA and PhD theses written by Yemeni students deal with the general history of pre-Islamic Yemen, while others focus on particular historical issues or specific phases in the ancient history of Yemen. Unfortunately, several of these theses are meagre and depend exclusively on secondary literature rather than the primary sources. Some of the theses contain copies of inscriptions and inaccurate translations. Numerous studies have been written about the Kingdom of Sabaʾ. Several studies have been written about specific Sabaean dynasties such as the Hamdanite dynasty.[130] Some studies are concerned with specific periods such as the reigns of the kings of Sabaʾ and Ḏū-Raydān or the Himayarite epoch.[131]

121 Al-Sheiba, Die Ortsnamen in den altsüdarabischen Inschriften, 1–61.

122 Maraqṭan, *Al-ʿĀṣima as-sabaʾīya Maʾrib*.

123 Al-ʿArašī, *Ṣanʿāʾ al-qadīma*.

124 Al-Ḥakīm, *Madīnat Ẓafār*.

125 ʿAbdallāh, *Timnaʿ: Haǧar Kuḥlān*.

126 Ġānim, *Madīnat Baynūn*.

127 Al-Ḥayānī, *Madīnat Yaklāʾ "an-Naḫla al-ḥamrāʾ"*.

128 Abdallāh, *Awrāq fī tārīḫ al-Yaman*; Bafaqīh, *Tawḥīd al-Yaman al-qadīm*.

129 Bāfaqīh, *Fī l-ʿArabīya as-Saʿīda*; cf. also Abdallāh, *Awrāq fī tārīḫ al-Yaman* and Al-Anṣārī, Al-*Kitāb al-marǧiʿ fī tārīḫ al-umma al-ʿarabīya*.

130 Al-Qaylī, *Mamlakat Sabaʾ fī ʿahd al-usra al-hamdānīya.*

131 As-Saqqāf, *Mulūk Sabaʾ wa-ḏū-raydān wa-Ḥaḍramawt wa-yamanat*; as-Saqqāf, *Aḍwāʾ ǧadīda ʿalā t-tārīḫ. Tabābiʿat wa-mulūk al-Yaman*; Nāširī, ʿA. *Al-Yaman fī ʿasr mulūk Sabaʾ wa-ḏī raydān*.

The period of the Himyaritic kingdom has also attracted the attention of Arab researchers.[132] Only a few studies treat the Kingdom of Qataban.[133] There also studies that focus on specific social groups.[134]

Studies have also treated the political history of ancient Yemen covering topics such as the origin and the formation of the state[135] and the ancient political institutions.[136] The ancient Yemeni chiefdoms have received the attention of researchers.[137] An example is Nāṣir's study on the titles *Aḏwāʾ* and *Aqyāl* and the political powers associated with them.[138] There is also a dissertation that deals with the conflicts and rivalries between the different kingdoms of Southern Arabia.[139] Another historical study concerns the Tihāma during the rule of the kings of Sabaʾ and Ḏī-Raydān.[140]

5.4 *Social and Economic History*

There are several studies on the social and economic structures in ancient Yemen.[141] Al-ʿAzʿazī has written about the political structure of the Kingdom of Sabaʾ.[142] Two studies have been written about nomadism in ancient South Arabia based on the epigraphic evidence. The first of these is an MA thesis submitted to Ṣanʿāʾ University[143] and the other is a PhD thesis that was submitted to Ṭanta University (Egypt).[144] There are several studies on the structure of the tribes in modern Yemen which take into account their historical backgrounds.[145] ʿA. ʿAqīl has written about alliances in ancient Yemen.[146] The land-tenure system and private property in ancient Yemen was the topic of a thesis by Damāǧ.[147]

132 On the Himyarite kingdom, see the comprehensive study with a good bibliography of I. Gajda, *Le royaume de Himyar à l'époque monothéiste* and the PhD of al-Qaylī, *Al-Yaman fī ʿaṣr mulūk Sabaʾ wa-ḏī-raydān wa-Ḥaḍramawt wa-yamanat.*

133 See the genera study of Al-Ḏafīf. *Mamalakat Qatabān*.

134 Ḥabtūr, *Al-yazanīyūn.*

135 Maraqṭan, Handasat ar-ray wa-dawruhā fī našʾat ad-dawla.

136 Baḥrī, *Taṭawwur nuẓum al-ḥukm fī l-Ǧazīra al-ʿArabīya.*

137 As-Sarīḥī, *Maqwalat Radmān wa-Ḫawlān.*

138 Nāṣir, *Al-Aḏwāʾ wal-aqyāl*.

139 ʿAṭbūš, *Aṣ-Ṣirāʿ bayna l-mamālik al-yamanīya al-qadīma.*

140 Wanas, *Tihāma wa-ʿalāqātuha bi-mamlakat Sabaʾ wa-Ḏī-Raydān*.

141 Al-Ḥamad, *Al-Aḥwāl al-iǧtimāʿīya wal-iqtiṣādīya fī l-Yaman*; ʿAbd al-Ġanī, *al-Ḥayāh al-iǧtimāʿīya fī l-Yaman al-qadīm.*

142 Al-ʿAzʿazī, *Dawlat sabaʾ wa-taṭawwurātihā as-siyāsīya.*

143 Al-Ašbaṭ, *Al-Aʿrāb fī tārīḫ al-Yaman al-qadīm.*

144 Rubāʿ, *Al-Aʿrāb fī an-nuqūš al-ʿarabīya al-ǧanūbīya.*

145 See for instance Abū Ġānim, *Al-Bunya l-qabalīya fī l-Yaman.*

146 ʿAqīl, *Al-Aḥlāf fī l-Yaman*.

147 Damāǧ, *Al-Milkīya fī l-Yaman al-qadīm.*

5.5 *Ancient Yemen and Her Neighbours*

Several studies have been written on the relations between the South Arabian kingdoms and neighboring lands. There are studies on relations between South and North Arabia,[148] between ancient Yemen and Bilād aš-Šām (Syria–Palestine),[149] as well as on the relations between Yemen and Abyssinia,[150] and Yemen's relations with the Greco-Roman World.[151] There is a good deal of information about the relations between the Arabian Peninsula and ancient Egypt.[152] One study has focused on the relations between ancient Arabia and Egypt in light of the ancient South Arabian inscriptions.[153] The kingdom of Maʿīn in the Yemeni Jawf has been the topic of several studies.[154]

5.6 *Daily Life*

The most important data about daily life in ancient Yemen, such as correspondence, contracts, and economic interactions is contained in the documents in minuscule script.[155] Theses have been written which deal with the subjects of clothing[156] and jewelry.[157]

5.7 *Legal Documents and Law*

More than four hundred legal documents recorded in monumental and minuscule scripts are known. Thus far, we lack a comprehensive study of the legal system in ancient South Arabia. A PhD dissertation on legal documents was submitted by N. Al-Naʿīm to King Saud University.[158] Al-Naʿīm collected most of the legal texts that were known before the year 2000. However, there are few translations and little analysis of the texts in this thesis. A comparative

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148 Abū l-Ġayṯ, *Al-ʿAlāqāt as-siyāsiya.*

149 Maraqṭan, Ḥawla al-ʿalāqāt mā bayna Bilād aš-Šām wal-Yaman fī ʿuṣūr mā qabla l-islām.

150 Al-Ašbaṭ, *Al-Aḥbāš fī tārīḫ al-Yaman al-qadīm.*

151 Al-Šuʿaybī, *Aṣ-Ṣilāt al-yūnānīya ar-rūmānīya bil-Yaman qabla l-islām*; Al-Ḥakīmī, *Malāmiḥ min al-ḥaḍāra al-klāsīkīya fī ḥaḍarat al-Yaman al-qadīm.*

152 Al-Sayyid, *Al-Baḥr al-Aḥmar wa-ẓahīruhu fī l-ʿuṣūr al-qadīma.*

153 Al-Sayyid, *Al-ʿAlāqāt al-ḥaḍārīya bayna l-Ǧazīra al-ʿArabīya wa-miṣr.*

154 ʿAbdallāh, *Mamlakat Maʿīn*; Aṯ-Ṭalāyā, *Mamlakat Maʿīn. Tārīḫ wa-ḥaḍara.*

155 ʿAbdallāh, Ḫaṭṭ al-musnad wan-nuqūš al-yamanīya al-qadīmah and Risāla min imraʾa bi-ḫaṭṭ az-zabūr; Maraqten, *Altsüdarabische Texte auf Holzstäbchen*; Faqʿas, *Nuqūš ḥašabīyah bi-ḫaṭṭ az-zabūr.*

156 Bāʿlaīyān, *Al-Malābis fī l-Yaman al-qadīm.*

157 Ṭayyib, *Al-Ḥulīy fī l-Yaman al-qadīm.*

158 An-Naʿīm, *At-Tašrīʿāt fī ǧanūb ġarb al-Ǧazīra al-ʿarabīya.* This work is a good collection of the legal texts until the year 1999 in ancient Yemen. However, dozens of texts have been published since that time in particular minuscule legal text, see for instance Maraqten, *Altsüdarabische Texte auf Holzstäbchen*, 121–132. Many of the translations of the text, which an-Naʿīm has suggested are not acceptable.

study between the Qatabanian legal system and the Aramaic legal documents of Hatra (in Iraq) has been written.[159]

5.8 *Agriculture and Irrigation Systems*

A PhD on the topic of agriculture in South Arabia has been furnished by F. al-Bārid.[160] Agricultural production has been treated in some university theses.[161] Several studies have been dedicated to irrigation systems and irrigated fields.[162] A solid study of irrigation depending on an archaeological survey has been carried out for the oasis of Ṣirwāḥ.[163]

Also of importance are some Yemeni studies on traditional agriculture and irrigation, such as the studies of Y. al-ʿAnsī which show that some agricultural terms known from the Sabaic inscriptions have survived into modern times.[164] Attention should be drawn to some significant early Islamic Yemeni texts on agriculture[165] and in particular the information from medieval Yemeni historical works such as those of Al-Hamdānī.[166] A modern study has been written on the Ghayls (water systems) of Ṣanʿāʾ.[167]

Of great importance are agricultural terms and the terms relating to irrigation in Yemeni dialects and oral traditions. Several studies have been written on this topic.[168] The main work on traditional water rights in Yemen is the study of Al-Maqṭarī.[169] A good MA thesis was written by Y.ʿA.Y. Dādiyya at ʿAdan University on the agricultural terms in the area of Ḏamār, south of Ṣanʿāʾ.[170]

5.9 *Trade and the Incense Road*

With the domestication of the camel in the second half of the second millennium BCE, international trade was established. The international incense route was active from at least the beginning of the first millennium BCE.[171]

159 Al-ʿAzʿazī, *At-Tašrīʿāt al-qatabāniyya al-ḥadāriyya*.
160 Al-Bārid, *Az-Zirāʿa fī ǧanūb ġarb al-Ǧazīra al-ʿArabiyya*.
161 Damāǧ, *Al-Maḥāṣīl az-zirāʿiyya fī l-Yaman al-qadīm*.
162 Al-Bārid, *An-Nuqūš al-musnadiyya al-mutaʿalliqa bi-ʾalmāʾ*; Bāfaqīh, *Taqniyyāt anẓimat ar-ray fī mamlakatay Qatabān wa-Ḥaḍramawt*.
163 Ṭuʿaimān, *Anẓimat ar-ray fī wāḥat Ṣirwāḥ al-qadīma*.
164 Al-ʿAnsī, *Al-Maʿālim al-zirāʿiyya fī l-Yaman*.
165 *Milḥ al-malāḥa fī maʿrifat al-filāḥa*.
166 Al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifat ǧazīrat al-ʿarab; Kitāb al-Iklīl* I, II, VIII, X.
167 ʿAslān, *Ġuyūl Ṣanʿāʾ*.
168 Al-Ḥusaynī, *Muʿǧam al-muṣṭalaḥāt az-zirāʿiyya fī ʾalfāẓ al-lahǧa al-laḥǧiyya*.
169 Maktari, *Water Rights and Irrigation Practices in Lahj*.
170 Dādīya, *Alfāz al-zirāʿah war-ray*.
171 Several studies have been achieved on the South Arabian trade, see Al-Malāʿiba, *Dawr mamālik šibh al-Ǧazīra al-ʿArabiyya fī at-tiǧāra ad-dawlīya*.

Several surveys of economic life in pre-Islamic Arabia have been written.[172] There are a number of studies focusing on the incense trade in particular.[173] One study is dedicated to the incense trade of the Kingdom of Hadramawt.[174] Important information has been published regarding South Arabian trade and diplomatic relations with Bilād aš-Šām.[175] There are also studies on the animals used for caravan trade such as camels.[176] Sea trade and the Yemeni seaports have also attracted the attention of scholars.[177]

Other specific topics such as the impact of the irrigation systems on the development and transformation of society and the emergence and formation of the state have been the subjects of studies.[178] Two studies have been written on the role of trade in the formation of the South Arabian kingdoms.[179]

5.10 *Arts, Crafts and Professions*

Arab scholars of ancient South Arabian studies have written relatively little on the topic of art in ancient Yemen. However, there are a few important studies on this topic that have been conducted in Arabic.[180] Among these are a study of bronze sculptures,[181] another on representations of animals in reliefs[182] and a study on birds in ancient South Arabian art.[183] An important collection of metal sculptures primary made of bronze discovered in Qaryat al-Faw has also been studied.[184] Only a few studies have been written on the topic of rock art in South Arabia, among these is a useful survey of rock art.[185]

Though the South Arabian inscriptions yield important information relating to crafts and professions, this topic has so far been little investigated. A general study on this topic has been written, however, it depends primarily on the *Sabaic Dictionary* and does not really deal with analysis of the inscriptions.[186]

172 An-Naʿīm, Al-Waḍāʿ *al-iqtiṣādī fī šibh al-Ǧazīra al-ʿArabīya.*
173 Abd al-Mawlā, *Tiǧārat al-baḫḫūr fī ǧanūb šibh al-Ǧazīra al-ʿArabīya*; Nāšir, *At-Tiǧara bayna al-Ǧazīra al-ʿArabīya wa-Sūrīya.*
174 Bāʿabbād, *Tiǧārat al-baḫḫūr fī mamlakat Ḥaḍramaut al-qadīma.*
175 Maraqṭan, Ḥawla al-ʿalāqāt mā bayna Bilād aš-Šām wal-Yaman.
176 Bāʿlaīyān, *Ḥayawānāt an-naql wal-ḥarb fī l-Yaman al-qadīm.*
177 Al-Muṭahhar, *Al-Mawāniʾ al-yamanīya al-qadīma: Dirāsa tārīḫīya.*
178 Maraqṭan, Handasat ar-ray wa-dawruhā fī našʾat ad-dawla.
179 Nāšir, *At-Tiǧāra wa-aṯaruhā fī taṭawwur mamālik al-Yaman al-qadīma*; Al-Wayyis, *Al-ʿImlāt al-yamanīya*; *An-Nuqūd fī l-Yaman ʿabr al-ʿuṣūr.*
180 Dāwūd, *Fann an-naḥt fī l-Ǧazīra al-ʿArabīya.*
181 ʿAqīl, *Al-Burunz fī l-Yaman al-qadīm.*
182 Al-ʿUmaysī, *At-Taǧsīdāt al-ḥayawānīya ʿala l-āṯār.*
183 Naǧīm, *Aškāl aṭ-ṭuyūr fī l-fann al-yamanī al-qadīm.*
184 Al-Sinān, *Al-Funūn al-maʿdanīya min qaryat al-Fāw.*
185 Al-ʿAydarūs, *Ar-Rusūm al-ādamīya aṣ-ṣaḫrīya.*
186 Al-Brīhī, *Al-Ḥiraf waṣ-ṣināʿāt fī ḍawʾ nuqūš al-musnad al-ǧanūbī.*

There is also a general survey of the crafts in pre-Islamic Arabia, which depends mainly on the medieval Arabic sources.[187] Unfortunately, very few studies have been done on the pottery in Yemen.[188]

5.11 *Hunting in Ancient Yemen*

We have good epigraphic data about hunting in pre-Islamic South Arabia from the early Sabaean period until the eve of Islam. Hunting scenes are also to be found in the rock art and the Sabaean reliefs.[189] An archaeological study on hunting in ancient Yemen has been published.[190]

5.12 *Warfare*

The written records yield plentiful information about warfare between the various tribes and the different kingdoms in ancient Yemen.[191] They also recount military campaigns in Central Arabia and inform us about the wars of the South Arabian kingdoms such as Saba' and Ḥimyar against the Abyssinians. Several modern studies have been written on this topic.[192] Of particular interest is Al-Waǧīh's study on weapons in ancient Yemen.[193]

5.13 *Women's Studies*

Although the primary sources provide a good deal of information on women in pre-Islamic South Arabia,[194] little has been written in Arabic on this topic.[195] Women are mentioned many times in the ancient South Arabian inscriptions and a specific category of these texts were written by women or authorized by women, making them of great importance.

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187 ʿĀmir, *Al-Ḥiraf waṣ-ṣināʿāt al-yadawīya fī l-Ǧazīra al-ʿArabīya*.

188 See the study of Al-Qāḍi, *Dirāsa taḥlīlīya lil-fuḫḫār al-yamanī al-qadīm*. On the restoration of artifacts, see As-Sanabānī, I. *Dirāsa ʿilmīya wa-taṭbīqīya fī tarmīm wa-ṣiyānat al-luqā*.

189 On hunting in pre-Islamic Arabia in the light of rock art and the epigraphic evidence including Yemen see Maraqten, Hunting in pre-Islamic Arabia.

190 Ṭuʿaimān, *Maṣāʾid al-wuʿūl fī madīnat Ṣirwāḥ al-qadīma*.

191 ʿAṭbūš, *Aṣ-Ṣirāʿ bayna l-mamālik al-yamanīya al-qadīma*.

192 Al-ʿUtaybī, *At-Tanẓīmāt wal-maʿārik al-ḥarbīya fī Saba'; As-Surūrī, Al-Ḥayāh al-ʿaskarīya fī Saba'; Ar-Raṣīn, Alfāẓ al-ḥarb fī n-nuqūš al-yamanīya al-qadīma*. These studies are depending on Beeston, *Warfare in Ancient South Arabia*.

193 Al-Waǧīh, *Al-Asliḥa fī l-Yaman al-qadīm*.

194 Maraqten, Women's inscriptions, 231–250.

195 Ṣāliḥ, *Al-Marʾa fī n-nuṣūṣ wal-āṯār al-ʿarabīya al-qadīma*; Al-Ḥaddād, Al-Marʾa fī l-Yaman al-qadīm.

5.14 *Religions and Temples in Ancient Yemen*

Several MA and PhD theses have been written at ʿAdan and Ṣanʿāʾ universities on the topic of religion and temples.[196] Specific studies were dedicated to the national god of Hadramawt, the national god of Qataban, and to other Qatabanian deities.[197] A solid MA thesis was written by Ḫ. Al-Zubayrī on the supreme god in ancient South Arabia.[198]

A number of studies have also been written about temples in ancient Yemen.[199] Some research has been done on offerings and sacrifices as well.[200] An example is al-Ṣilwī's study on children who were dedicated to the service of the deities in their temples.[201] Research has also been published on monotheism, Christianity, and Judaism in pre-Islamic Yemen.[202]

5.15 *Chronology and Dating Systems*

Several methods have been used for dating inscriptions from ancient Yemen. In addition to the study of palaeography and attempts to synchronize the chronology of ancient Yemen with that of other parts of the ancient Near East, the indigenous dating systems used by the ancient South Arabian kingdoms such as Sabaʾ are very valuable. In Sabaʾ an eponymous dating system was used,[203] while the Himyarites used a dating system according to eras.[204] The contributions of M. Bāfaqīh to the study of the chronology of ancient Yemen are very significant.[205] In addition, two dissertations were written on this topic in Arabic.[206]

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196 Al-Qaḥṭānī, *Ālihat al-Yaman al-qadīm*; al-ʿArīqī, *Al-Fann al-miʿmārī wal-fikr ad-dīnī fī l-Yaman al-qadīm*; Aš-Šihāb, *Al-Maʿābid wa-waẓīfatuhā ad-dīnīnīya fī Sabaʾ.*

197 al-Ḥasanī, *Al-Ilāh Sīn fī diyanat Ḥaḍramawt al-qadīma*; Al-Ḥasanī, *Al-Ilāh ʿAmm wa-ālihat Qatabān.*

198 Az-Zubayrī, *al-ʾIlāh ʿAṯtar fī diyānat Sabaʾ.*

199 Aš-Šihāb, *Al-Maʿābid wa-waẓīfatuhā ad-dīnīnīya fī Sabaʾ.*

200 Al-Ḥammādī, *Al-Qarābīn wan-nuḏūr.*

201 See Al-Ṣilwī, *Nuqūš al-ihdāʾāt fī l-Yaman al-qadīm.*

202 Mirʿī, *At-Taḥawwulāt ad-dīnīya.*

203 This dating system was a calendar system used primarily in the Kingdom of Saba', for a period of hundreds of years. Every year was related to the individual, an eponym, the person holding office. The office was fixed for several years for that specific person. It was in the hands of particular families, see Maraqten, *Altsüdarabische Texte auf Holzstäbchen*, 57–63.

204 Müller, *Sabäische Inschriften nach Ären datiert.*

205 Bafaqīh, *L'Unification du Yemen Antique.*

206 Al-Ḥammādī, *Anẓimat at-taʾrīḫ fī n-nuqūš as-sabaʾīya*; ʿAsīrī, *At-Taqwīm fī šibh al-Ǧazīra al-ʿArabīya.*

6 Methodologies of Arab Historians and an Assessment of Their Contributions to the Study of Ancient Yemen

Many Arab scholars have contributed to the study of the history, archaeology and epigraphy of pre-Islamic Yemen. The point of view of these scholars is that they are studying their own history, since Yemen played an in important role in the formation of pre-Islamic Arabian history.

This chapter has presented an overview of the contributions of modern Arab scholars to the writing of the history of ancient Yemen and some critical assessment of their work has been made. It should be stressed that this chapter does not present an exhaustive survey of all modern Arabic scholarship on Yemen. It has concentrated primarily on PhD and MA theses written by the current generation of Arab students dealing with the archaeology and epigraphy of ancient Yemen. Only a small number of articles in Arabic have been mentioned.

A review of the Arabic dissertations in this field reveals that there has been widespread interest in ancient Yemeni studies at universities across the Arab World including in Egypt (Cairo University, Az-Zaqāziq University, Asyūṭ University), Tunisia (Tunis University), Algeria (University of Algiers), Morocco (Hassan II University), Lebanon (American University of Beirut), Syria (Damascus University), Jordan (Yarmouk University), Iraq (University of Baghdad) and Saudi Arabia (King Saud University, Riyadh). At the same time, it should be stressed that the majority of the scholars who produced these theses are Yemeni.

Most of these studies focus on historical topics, a smaller number on the archaeology of ancient Yemen, and a very small number deal with epigraphy. Most of these dissertations are not published, though some of them can be accessed online. Unfortunately, some of the dissertations are not of high quality since the students could not use the epigraphic sources properly. Some of the students had no solid understanding of the epigraphic texts because they lacked a thorough training in ancient South Arabian epigraphy at the universities where they submitted their theses.[207] However, it should be emphasized that within this body of dissertations there are also some important, high-quality studies on the archeology and epigraphy of ancient Yemen which should be published and made widely available for scholarship.

207 Al-Qaylī, *Al-Yaman fī ʿaṣr mulūk Sabaʾ wa-ḏī-raydān wa-Ḥaḍramawt wa-yamanat.*

6.1 *The Traditional Historians*

Many traditional Arab scholars still seem to be arguing within the canons of established orthodox Islamic tradition and its mixture of historical, scholarly and legendary elements. These scholars still dominate the historiography of pre-Islamic Arabia.[208] Much of their writing is non-scholarly. It relies heavily on Classical Arabic sources and collective memories and less on critical study of the inscriptions and remains from the pre-Islamic era. They deal with pre-Islamic Arabia as the age of *al-jāhilīyya*, or ignorance.

6.2 *Public Historians: Non-Academic Historians*

This term is used in contrast to professional, academic historians. Arab public historians have flourished in recent years. These historians are mostly amateurs and the writing they produce consists heavily of non-scholarly work as well as ideological dogmas and therefore it is of little value.[209]

6.3 *Professional Academic Historians*

The study of the ancient civilizations in the Arab countries started in the nineteenth century, during the colonial period. The colonial method for dealing with writing ancient history was fixed according to the practices of colonial archaeology and influenced by Orientalism. This method continued, more or less, until the emergence of the post-colonial Arab states, and influenced to some extent the modern Arab academic historians.[210]

Fortunately, contemporary Western specialists in ancient Yemeni studies do not apply postcolonial historical approaches in studying pre-Islamic Yemen. The approaches of Biblical Archaeology have been applied to the Yemeni region only in a few very limited cases.

The Arab academic historians make use of the primary sources for the history of pre-Islamic Arabia, such as inscriptions. Yemen has a special status in the formation of Arab history and that is why several academic historians from other Arab countries contributed to the study of the ancient history of Yemen. In additions, dozens of Arabic MA and PhD dissertations on pre-Islamic Yemen have been written, primarily at Ṣanʿāʾ and ʿAdan universities.

208 Al-Akwaʿ, *Al-Yaman al-ḫaḍrāʾ*; Tarsīsī, *Bilād sabaʾ wa-ḥaḍārāt al-ʿarab al-ūlā*, ʿInān, *Tārīḫ al-Yaman al-qadīm*.

209 Among these public authors is the Iraqi F. Ar-Rubayʿī, who wrote several unscientific books such as *Ḥaqīqat as-saybī al-bābilī*.

210 Maraqten, Al-Ḥaḍārāt al-qadīma fī l-bilād al-ʿarabīya wa-masʾalat al-huwīya.

There are several general presentations in Arabic on the history and civilizations of ancient Yemen. The first is Ǧawād ʿAlīs *al-Mufaṣṣal fī tārīḫ al-ʿArab qabla l-islām* (10 vols).[211] This work is still considered to be a standard reference on Arabia before Islam, and to date no other general work has replaced it. In addition to his *Al-Mufaṣṣal*, Ǧawād ʿAlī wrote many shorter studies and articles on pre-Islamic Arab history.[212] Also of interest is the *Handbook on the History and Archaeology of the Arab world* (*Al-Kitāb al-marǧiʿ fī tārīḫ al-umma al-ʿarabīya*), which includes several chapters on pre-Islamic Arabia. However, most of the chapters, including the ones on Yemen, are meagre and do not make use of the most up-to-date sources. The authors did not take into consideration the archaeological discoveries of the last four decades.[213]

Professional Yemeni historians such as Muḥammad Bāfaqīh and Yūsuf ʿAbdallāh have contributed extensively to the study of the ancient history of Yemen. A general presentation of the ancient civilizations of Yemen by Yūsuf ʿAbdallāh entitled *Pages from the History of Yemen* (*Awrāq fī tārīḫ al-Yaman*) is still widely used. The Arabic translation of the catalogue of the Yemen Exhibit in Paris is also very popular among students and scholars. This catalogue is the most solid introduction to studying ancient Yemen in Arabic. The historical studies on ancient Yemen by M. Bāfaqīh are widely respected.[214] Furthermore, Ḫ.Y. Nāmī wrote an outline of the history of the Arabs before Islam and their languages.[215]

7 Conclusion

This outline of Arab contributions to the study of the archaeology and history of pre-Islamic Yemen demonstrates that there are some very important studies composed in Arabic. Although some studies show academic weakness, there

211 There is no doubt that this work of Ǧawād ʿAlī is very solid. However, ʿAlī is more a collector of historical data than an analyzer. At the same time the data for Yemen is not up-to-date since it ended in his *al-Mufaṣṣal* around the beginning of the 1960s. Further, the chronology used in *al-Mufaṣṣal* on the kingdoms of ancient Yemen is currently unacceptable since our knowledge has been changed totally by recent archaeological and epigraphic discoveries.

212 The academic essays of Ǧawād ʿAlī were collected and published by two different people, each one published the articles in two volumes, see Abd ar-Raḥīm, *Al-Āṯār al-ʿarabīya* and Al-Kaʿbī, *Abḥāṯ fī tārīḫ al-ʿarab qabla l-islām*.

213 Al-Anṣārī, *Al-Kitāb al-marǧiʿ fī tārīḫ al-umma al-ʿarabīya.*

214 Bāfaqīh, *Tārīḫ al-Yaman al-qadīm*, *Fī l-ʿArabīya as-Saʿīda.*

215 Nāmī, *Al-ʿArab qabla l-islām.*

are also high-quality studies and it is not possible to deal with several topics relating to the ancient history of Yemen without taking into account modern Arabic scholarship. One problem facing the field is that Western epigraphers are generally only interested in the publications of inscriptions by Arab scholars and not with the Arabic translations of these inscriptions or the meanings of the technical terms found in them. Likewise, Arab scholars generally are only concerned with the editions of inscriptions by Western epigraphers and not the translations of the inscriptions into European languages. Another difficulty facing scholars on both sides is the lack of ability to read modern studies in all relevant languages, especially works in German, Italian, Russian or French. In addition, the majority of western archaeologists do not take into consideration Yemeni surveys and excavations. However, among the Arabic dissertations on South Arabian archaeology and epigraphy there are some works of great significance that could even be described as pioneering works, particularly those which are based on fieldwork and depend on the results of surveys or excavations.

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